

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 55-95 are pending in the present application. Claims 55, 59, 65, 67, 69, 76, 79, 82 and 83 are amended and Claims 91-95 are added by the present amendment.

Applicant submits that new Claims 91-95 find support in the originally filed specification at least at page 11, lines 17-28. It is believed no new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claim 69 was objected to; Claims 65-68, 72, 73, 82-84, 87, 88 and 90 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,559,584 to Miyaji et al. (herein "Miyaji") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,337,161 to Chiba et al. (herein "Chiba"), U.S. Patent No. 6,153,044 to Klebanoff et al. (herein "Klebanoff"), and U.S. Patent No. 5,422,704 to Sego; Claims 55-64, 76-81, and 89 were allowed; and Claims 70, 71, 74, 75, 85, and 86 were indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Initially, applicant gratefully acknowledges Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter.

Regarding the objection to Claim 69, Claim 69 is amended to correct a minor informality, in light of comments in the outstanding Office Action. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that objection be withdrawn.

Claims 65-68, 72, 73, 82-84, 87, 88 and 90 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Miyaji in view of Chiba, Klebanoff, and Sego. Applicant respectfully traverses that rejection.

Amended Claim 65 is directed to an exposure apparatus that transfers a pattern of a mask onto a substrate by irradiating the mask with exposure light. The exposure apparatus

includes a sealed mask room that covers an optical path near the mask of the optical path of the mask to the substrate and that is filled with gas having a characteristic of absorbing little of the exposure light. The exposure apparatus also includes a sealed mask-reserve room, which temporarily contains the mask before being carried into the mask room, with at least one door through which the mask is transported, a gas-replacement system connected to the mask-reserve room that supplies a specific gas to the mask-reserve room, and a removing system connected to the mask-reserve room that removes materials having absorption for exposure light and existing around the mask. Amended independent Claim 82 includes similar features.

Applicant respectfully submits that Miyaji does not disclose or suggest a removing system which removes materials having absorption for exposure light and existing around a mask temporarily contained in a mask-reserve room. Miyaji only discloses a sealed mask room 1 and a sealed mask-reserve room 12, and discloses that gas in the sealed mask-reserve room is replaced, but does not teach the remaining features of Claims 65 and 82.¹ Accordingly, applicant respectfully submits that Miyaji does not teach or suggest “a sealed mask-reserve room, which temporarily contains said mask . . . and a removing system connected to said mask-reserve room that removes materials having absorption for exposure light and existing around said mask,” as in independent Claims 65 and 82.

Further, it is respectfully submitted that Chiba, Klebanoff, and Sego also do not teach the features of amended independent Claims 65 and 82. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 65 and 82, and the claims depending therefrom, are allowable.

¹ Miyaji at column 7, lines 60-67, and at Figure 5.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Customer Number

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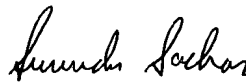
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Respectfully submitted,

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